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Laying the Foundations For Seeking Knowledge

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About the Book: This book is a complete translation of the booklet ***"At-Ta'seel fee Talab-il-'Ilm"*** (Laying the Foundations for Seeking Knowledge). The source used for this translation was the Dar-ul-Imaam 1st edition, 2005.

Originally, this treatise was a lecture the Shaikh once gave in a masjid. The talk was then transcribed and published as a book.

In this treatise, Shaikh Muhammad Baazmool discusses in detail nine fundamental principles with regard to seeking knowledge, which he puts together and backs up with proofs and evidences. Consequently, the treatise is divided into nine chapters and an introduction.

This topic is extremely important since every Muslim is obligated to seek knowledge at one point in his life or another be it to implement the Islamic laws that are binding on him or to learn the fundamentals of his faith. So he must know that seeking knowledge has manners, etiquettes and guidelines, some of which have been touched upon by the author in this treatise.

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INTRODUCTION

Verily, all praise is due to Allaah. We praise Him, we seek His assistance and we ask Him for His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Allaah from the evils of our souls and the evils of our actions. Whoever Allaah guides, there is no one that can lead him astray, and whoever He allows to go astray, there is no one that can guide him.

I bear witness that there is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Allaah – He stands alone and without any partners. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اتَّقُواْ اللّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلاَ تَمُوتُنَّ إِلاَّ وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

"O you who believe, fear Allaah as He ought to be feared and do not die except as Muslims." [Surah Aali 'Imraan: 103]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُواْ رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالاً كَثِيراً وَنِسَاء وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءلُونَ بِهِ وَالأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"O mankind, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul (Aadam), and from that, He created his wife, and from them, He created many men and women. Fear Allaah through whom you demand your mutual rights, and (do not cut off the relations of) the wombs. Surely, Allaah is ever an All-Watcher over you." [Surah An-Nisaa: 1]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا . يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَن يُطِعْ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

"O you who believe, fear Allaah and be truthful and precise in your speech. He will rectify your deeds for you and forgive you of your sins. And whoever obeys Allaah and His Messenger has achieved a great success." [Surah Al-Ahzaab: 70-71]

As for what follows, then indeed, the best of speech is the Book of Allaah, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad ﷺ. And the most evil of affairs are newly invented matters, for indeed every newly invented matter is an innovation, and every innovation is a misguidance. And every misguidance is in the Hellfire.

To Proceed:

I praise Allaah for granting me the ability to have this meeting with you in which I hope that He will place much goodness and blessing for everyone.

In this gathering which is being held in Masjid al-Ameer Mut'ib in Jeddah on Thursday, the 6th day of the month of Rabee'-ul-Awwal, 1421H, we will discuss the subject: **"Laying the Foundations for Seeking Knowledge."**

It is no secret to every Muslim that knowledge is important. This is such that everyone claims to have it. Even an ignorant person is not pleased with being called ignorant, and he becomes happy when he is called knowledgeable!

'Alee bin Abee Taalib, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: "It is enough proof that knowledge is honorable that those who are not fit for it claim to have it and are happy when it is attributed to them. And it is enough proof that ignorance is condemnable that those who have it free themselves from it." [1]

How can a Muslim be unaware of the virtue of knowledge and the merit of the scholars when he is always reading Allaah's statement:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

"Say: Are those who know equal to those who don't know?" [Surah Az-Zumar: 9]

And he also hears Allaah's statement:

شَهِدَ اللّهُ أَنَّهُ لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَالْمَلاَئِكَةُ وَأُوْلُواْ الْعِلْمِ قَآئِمَاً بِالْقِسْطِ لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

"Allaah bears witness that there is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Him, and so do the angels and those who possess knowledge. He is always maintaining (His creation) with justice – there is none that deserves to be worshipped except Him, the All-Mighty, Most Wise." [Surah Aali 'Imraan: 18]

So Allaah linked the testimony of the people of knowledge as well as the angels with His testimony.

How can a Muslim not know the virtue of seeking knowledge when he constantly hears the statement of the Prophet ﷺ: **"Whoever treads a path in which he seeks knowledge, Allaah will make easy for him a path to Paradise"** [2] and his saying: **"Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim."** [3]

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[1] *Tadhkirat-us-Saami' wal-Mutakallim* (pg. 10)
[2] Reported by Muslim, Abu Dawood, At-Tirmidhee, An-Nasaa'ee, Ibn Maajah, and Ibn Hibbaan in his *Saheeh*
[3] This was reported by Ibn Maajah in his *Sunan* on the authority of Anas bin Maalik. Its chain of narration is very weak. However, the hadeeth has many paths of narration and supporting evidences that raise it to the level of "authentic based on other narrations." Refer to Al-Albaanee's referencing of this hadeeth in *Mushkilat-ul-Faqr* (pg. 86)

Rather, how can he have any doubts on the importance of having religious knowledge of those things that a Muslim needs in his life, when he adheres to a religion that is founded upon two principles, which are:

1. That no one but Allaah has the right to be worshipped, and
2. That one should not worship Allaah except with that which He legislated.

These two principles form the essence of the statement of Tawheed: **"I bear witness that there is no deity that deserves to be worshipped except Allaah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger."**

Therefore, having religious knowledge is a requirement needed for fully implementing the statement of Tawheed. This is especially the case since: How can a Muslim implement the second principle, which is that one should not worship Allaah except with that which He legislated, without seeking knowledge? This is why knowledge must precede statements and actions.

Al-Bukhaaree, may Allaah have mercy on him, explained this point in his *Saheeh*, saying in his Book of Knowledge:

"Chapter: Knowledge comes before speech and action due to Allaah's statement: **'So know that there is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Allaah.'** [Surah Muhammad: 19] So He started with knowledge first.

Furthermore, the scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets. And the thing that the Prophets have left behind as inheritance is knowledge. So whoever takes hold of it, has gained a large share of inheritance.

Also, whoever treads a path by which he seeks knowledge, Allaah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. Allaah says:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء

"Verily, it is only those who have knowledge amongst His servants that fear Allaah." [Surah Faatir: 28]

And He says:

وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلاَّ الْعَالِمُونَ

"And no one comprehends it except for those with knowledge." [Surah Al-'Ankaboot: 43]

Allaah says:

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

"And they will say: 'If only we had listened or used our intellects, we would not be amongst the inhabitants of the Hellfire.'" [Surah Al-Mulk: 10]

And He says:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

"Say: Are those who know equal to those who don't know?" [Surah Az-Zumar: 9]

The Prophet ﷺ said: **"Whoever Allaah intends good for, He grants him understanding of the Religion."** And he ﷺ said: **"Indeed, knowledge is (only obtained) by learning."**

Abu Dharr said: "If you were to place a blade upon this – and he pointed to the nape of his neck – and then I thought that I could implement some statement I heard from the Prophet ﷺ before you released the blade on me, I would do it."

Ibn 'Abbaas said: "Be you *Rabbaaniyeen* – forbearing and understanding."

It is said that a Rabbaanee is someone who cultivates the people with the smaller aspects of knowledge before the bigger aspects.

[End of the words of Imaam Al-Bukhaaree]

Al-Bukhaaree, may Allaah have mercy on him, mentioned all of these statements in this chapter.

Since this is the way knowledge is, the opponents will strive to cut off its path and to place obstacles, impediments and falsehoods to obstruct the path for the student of knowledge. But oh how wrong they are, for indeed, the people of knowledge have taken a stance against them. And from their efforts in this regard, was to point out the manners and duties (of seeking knowledge) that will serve to expose these falsehoods and lies.

And since the reminder benefits the believers, it is from the perspective of reminding (ourselves) that this lecture is being given – i.e. as a reminder of the statements of the people of knowledge on this subject, so that perhaps Allaah will place universal benefit and good in this effort. Therefore, I say, seeking assistance from Allaah:

I will list for you, may Allaah bless you, the statements of the people of knowledge that are related to the topic of this lecture in the form of fundamental principles that I have arranged for

you. I will first mention the principle and then mention the proofs and evidences that affirm it. After that, I will discuss the matters that emanate from such a principle.

These principles are as follows – I will mention them here generally then go over them in detail later:

1. Seeking knowledge – which a Muslim needs in order to perform the acts of worship that are binding on him – is an obligation that is compulsory on him. As for what exceeds those limits, then acquiring knowledge of that falls under the collective obligations (*fard kifaayah*), and it is something recommended and extra for the student of knowledge.

2. What is meant by the **"knowledge"** that is mentioned in the *ayaat* and the *ahaadeeth* is knowledge of the Religion. As for the universal, physical and material sciences, then (acquiring knowledge of) these are a collective obligation.

3. Sincerity in seeking knowledge is a condition that is continuous not just preliminary.

4. Knowledge means: The statements of Allaah and His Messenger and the statements of the Sahaabah (Companions), along with the unanimous agreement of the scholars (*ijmaa'*) and correct logical conclusion (*qiyaas*).

5. The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets, so one must observe good manners in front of them.

6. Obstacles in the path of seeking knowledge. [4]

7. The ways of maintaining knowledge.

8. Stages for investigating the issues of knowledge.

9. People are divided into two categories with respect to knowledge: (1) Those who know, and (2) those who don't know.

These are the nine foundations that this lecture will be based on. Now let us begin with the first foundation:

[4] **Translator's Note:** There is an entire treatise devoted to this topic, i.e. obstacles in the path of seeking knowledge, written by the late Shaikh 'Abdus-Salaam bin Barjas Aali 'Abdil-Kareem, may Allaah have mercy on him, which is a tremendous and beneficial book.

THE FIRST FOUNDATION:

Seeking knowledge – which a Muslim needs in order to perform the acts of worship that are binding on him – is an obligation that is compulsory on him. As for what exceeds those limits, then acquiring knowledge of that falls under the collective obligations (*fard kifaayah*), and it is something recommended and extra for the student of knowledge.

The proof for this foundation is what has been reported from the Prophet ﷺ that he said: **"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim."**

Another proof is the fact that this Religion is founded upon two basic principles, which are:

1. That we don't worship anyone except Allaah, and
2. That we don't worship Allaah except with what He has legislated.

One cannot truly worship Allaah unless he first seeks the necessary knowledge required of him to properly put into effect this worship that Allaah has made obligatory on him, and for which purpose He created him.

Elucidating this point further, Ishaaq bin Raahawaih said: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory, even though the report concerning it is not authentic. However, what it means is that the seeker of knowledge is required to learn what he needs in order to properly implement his ablution, prayer, Zakaat – if he has wealth – Hajj and so on."

He also said: "Whatever knowledge one is obligated to acquire, he need not ask the permission of his parents to go out and learn it. But as for what is in excess of that, he should not go out to acquire (knowledge of) that until he first gets permission to do so from his parents." [5]

Ibn Taimiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Seeking religious knowledge is a collective obligation (*fard kifaayah*) except for that which is incumbent upon each individual to know, such as every person seeking knowledge of what Allaah has ordered him to do and what Allaah has prohibited him to do, since this is an individual obligation." [6]

This is one of the most important foundations, by which, the followers of Hadeeth are distinguished from all others, and due to which the innovators accuse the followers of Hadeeth, claiming that their main goal is only issues of purification, prayer and their likes!!

But in reality, there is nothing wrong with this since it is with (knowledge of) purification that you will be able to achieve the key to prayer.

[5] *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilmi wa Fadlihi* (1/9)
[6] *Majmoo'-ul-Fataawaa* (28/80)

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: **"The key to prayer is purification. Its *tahreem* (commencement) is the *takbeer* (i.e. saying *Allaahu Akbar*) and its *tahleel* (ending) is the *tasleem* (i.e. saying *As-Salaam 'Alaikum*)."** [7]

He ﷺ also said: **"Islaam is built upon five (pillars): (1) The testimony that there is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Allaah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah; (2) Establishing the Prayer; (3) Paying the Zakaat; (4) Fasting in Ramadaan; and (5) the Pilgrimage (Hajj) to the Sacred House of Allaah for whoever is able to do it."** [8]

For this reason, the first thing a student of knowledge is advised to do is strive to obtain the knowledge that is binding on him first. This is why when Imaam Maalik was asked about seeking knowledge, he said: "All of it is good. However, look into what you need for (the transactions of) your day and night, and then seek (knowledge of) that."

This is since you will not truly actualize the worship of Allaah until you first obtain knowledge of what He has legislated for you in those matters (of worship). So once you obtain that knowledge, you will be aware of how to perform *wudoo*, how to pray, how to perform *ghusl*, how to give Zakaat – if you have wealth, how to perform the Pilgrimage (Hajj) – if you intend to do it, the rules of marriage – if you intend to marry someone, the rules of divorce – if you intend to divorce someone, and so on.

*** This foundation entails the following matters:**

1. The ruling of an obligation. This relates to a Muslim that is responsible for his actions. If he is young (i.e. under the age of puberty), then it is upon his parents to teach him the required matters of his Religion. This is since the Prophet ﷺ said: **"All of you are shepherds and all of you are responsible for his flock."** [9]

And Allaah says:

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[7] This is from the narration of 'Alee ﷺ. It was reported by Abu Dawood in his *Sunan*: Book of Purification: Chapter: The Obligation of Ablution (no. 61); At-Tirmidhee in his *Sunan*: Book of Purification: Chapter: What has been reported about the Key to Prayer being the Purification (no. 3); and Ibn Maajah in his *Sunan*: Book of Purification: Chapter: The Key to Prayer is the Purification (no. 27)

[8] This is from the narration of 'Umar ﷺ. It was reported by Al-Bukhaaree in his *Saheeh*: Book of Faith: Chapter: Islaam was built upon five things (no. 8); and Muslim in his *Saheeh*: Book of Faith: Chapter: A Clarification of the Pillars of Islaam and its Great Foundations (no. 16)

[9] This hadeeth was reported by Al-Bukhaaree in several places in his *Saheeh*, such as the Book of Friday Prayer (no. 893) and the Book of Leadership (no. 1829). The wording in Al-Bukhaaree from 'Abdullaah bin 'Umar ﷺ is as follows: "**All of you are shepherds and all of you are responsible for his flock. The Imaam is a shepherd and he is responsible for his flock. A man is a shepherd with regard to his family and he is responsible for his flock. A woman is a shepherd with regard to her husband's home, and she is responsible for her flock. A servant is a shepherd with regard to his master's property and he is responsible for his flock."** – And I think he also said – **"A man is a shepherd with regard to his father's property and is responsible for his flock. All of you are shepherds and all of you are responsible for his flock."**

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ
عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

"O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is men and stones. Over it are angels that are stern and severe who do not disobey what Allaah has ordered them to do. And they carry out what they are commanded." [Surah At-Tahreem: 6]

Therefore, it is binding upon the Muslim father and the Muslim mother to teach their children what they are required to know from the matters of the Religion and good manners.

2. The student of knowledge must give precedence to acquiring knowledge of what is obligatory upon him to know over what is recommended for him to know. Preoccupying oneself with learning the recommended forms of knowledge whilst neglecting the obligatory forms of knowledge is one of the obstacles and impediments of seeking knowledge. So, for example, you may find a person speaking about the intricate issues of the Language, or on Grammar, Terminology, the Science of Eloquence and on Principles, yet he is not able to properly perform ablution in the same manner as that of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ, nor is he able to perform the prayer properly like the Prophet ﷺ used to pray…and so on and so forth!!

3. A seeker of knowledge should not oppose his parents by traveling abroad in search of knowledge that in his case is considered to be recommended. But in the case where that knowledge that he intends to travel abroad for is from the forms of knowledge that is binding upon him to know in order to worship Allaah during the night and day, then he may go ahead and travel, as was advised by Imaam Ishaaq in his previously mentioned statement: "Whatever knowledge one is obligated to acquire, he need not ask the permission of his parents to go out and learn it. But as for what is in excess of that, he should not go out to acquire (knowledge of) that until he first gets permission to do so from his parents." [10]

4. The supportive sciences, or what some scholars commonly call "The applied sciences", such as the Arabic Language, the Science of Eloquence, the Science of Principles, Hadeeth Terminology, and the Sciences of the Qur'aan – a student of knowledge should acquire from these that which will enable him to actualize the primary objective, which is to properly worship Allaah – the reason for which we were created. And if this is not the case, then it falls under the realm of being from the extravagant forms of knowledge, and Allaah knows best. So it is not required from a student of knowledge studying Grammar that he becomes like Seebawaih, nor from one studying the Arabic Language that he becomes like Al-Khaleel and Al-Azharee, nor from one studying the Science of Eloquence that he becomes like Al-Jirjaanee!! Rather, it is sufficient for him to only learn from all of that what he needs to properly understand the Book and the Sunnah and to implement what Allaah has obligated upon him from worship.

[10] *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilmi wa Fadlihi* (1/9)

THE SECOND FOUNDATION:

What is meant by the "knowledge" that is mentioned in the *ayaat* and the *ahaadeeth* is knowledge of the Religion. As for the universal, physical and material sciences, then these are all a collective obligation.

These sciences fall under Allaah's statement:

وَأَعِدُّواْ لَهُم مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ

"And prepare against them all you can of power, including steeds of war…" [Surah Al-Anfaal: 60]

They also fall under the principle: **"There is no harming (of oneself) or harming others."**

And they fall under the principle: **"That which is necessary for the fulfillment of an obligation becomes itself obligatory."**

*** This principle consists of the following matters:**

1. The statement: **"This is obligatory for every Muslim or student of knowledge to know"** cannot be applied unrestrictedly to any of the types of knowledge except for the Islamic sciences. An example of this is what is known nowadays as "Knowledge of Current Affairs", which focuses on following reports and information from newspapers and magazines, and which some people say is: "An obligatory form of knowledge that every student of knowledge is required to learn!"

2. The type of knowledge that the Salaf praised and which they intended by their statements is nothing else but knowledge of the Religion. This is the knowledge that was intended in statements such as that of Mu'aadh ﷺ, when he said:

"Learn knowledge, for indeed learning it for the sake of Allaah is awe (of Him), seeking it is worship, studying it is glorification (of Allaah), researching it is Jihaad, teaching it to those unaware of it is charity, and giving it out to one's family builds ties. It is a friend in privacy, a companion in solitude, a guide in times of ease, an aide in times of difficulty, a counselor to the friends (of Allaah), a close-relative to the strangers, and a lighthouse for the path to Paradise.

Allaah raises people by way of it, thus making them noble leaders, emulated chiefs in matters of good, and guides to goodness whose footsteps are followed and whose deeds are highly regarded."

So therefore, from the things that this principle entails is that: The knowledge that Allaah, His Messenger and the predecessors, such as the Sahaabah and the Taabi'een have praised is nothing else but knowledge of the Religion. As for all of the other forms of knowledge, they were not the ones intended in the praise for "knowledge" found in these *ayaat*, *ahaadeeth* and statements of the Salaf.

So knowledge of medicine, engineering, chemistry, and physics is not what was intended in the *ayaat* and *ahaadeeth*.

Once we come to understand this, we must ask: "What is the ruling on learning these other sciences?"

I say: It falls under the collective obligations, Acquiring knowledge of these sciences falls under (the principle): **"That which is necessary for the fulfillment of an obligation becomes itself obligatory."**

Acquiring knowledge of these sciences falls under the statement of Allaah:

وَأَعِدُّواْ لَهُم مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ

"And prepare against them all you can of power, including steeds of war…" [Surah Al-Anfaal: 60]

This is the ruling on these sciences. If some people take on the responsibility of learning them, the obligation becomes removed from everyone else.

What also falls under the requisites of this principle is what I mentioned to you previously – that it cannot be unrestrictedly stated that these sciences or their likes are obligatory for every Muslim to know.

So for all the more reason, it is incorrect to unrestrictedly say that the knowledge of that which is associated with newspapers and magazines is from the "knowledge" that every student is obliged to learn.

THE THIRD FOUNDATION:

Sincerity in seeking knowledge is a condition that is continuous and not just preliminary:

What this means is that the student of knowledge should continually strive to implement sincerity in himself, and that he should not refrain from his studies due to the claim that he did not achieve sincerity.

Some scholars have provided the following definition for sincerity (*ikhlaas*):

Ibn Jamaa'ah said: "It means that one has a good intention when seeking knowledge, by intending through his studies to please Allaah, to act in accordance with what he learns, to revive the *Sharee'ah* (Islamic legislation), to illuminate his heart, to elucidate its (i.e. knowledge's) hidden meanings; to get near to Allaah on the Day of Judgement, and to subject oneself to what Allaah has prepared for those who possess it, such as His Contentment and great virtue."

Sufyaan Ath-Thawree, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "I did not try to rectify anything that was more difficult upon me than my intention."

One should not intend, by his search for knowledge, to fulfill some worldly goal such as assuming leadership, gaining status and wealth, competing with colleagues, having people extol him, taking the front seat in a gathering, and so on, since he will be exchanging that which is better for that which is lower.

Abu Yoosuf, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Intend Allaah through your (search for) knowledge, for indeed I never sat in a gathering of people in which I made it my intention to humble myself except that I didn't leave from it until I had surpassed them. And I never sat in a gathering of people in which I made it my intention to surpass them, except that I didn't leave from it until I was disgraced.

Knowledge is one of the many acts of worship and one of the many ways of gaining nearness to Allaah. So if one purifies his intention while seeking it, his deed will be accepted and purified. And its blessing will become complete. However, if he intends other than the sake of Allaah when seeking knowledge, his deed becomes nullified and wasted and his transaction is lost. Perhaps he may even miss out on these (worldly) objectives and never achieve any of them. So in this case, he will have failed in his objective and at the same time wasted his efforts." [11]

*** This principle entails several matters, the most important of which is:**

[11] *Tadhkirat-us-Saami' wal-Mutakallim* (pg. 69-70)

The Devil enters into the hearts of some people desiring to turn them away from knowledge based on the argument that one should leave off seeking knowledge until he first purifies his intention. This is a plot, scheme and deception of the Devil. Rather, it is upon a Muslim to continue and persevere in his search for knowledge, and to constantly re-evaluate his intention, as Sufyaan Ath-Thawree said: "I did not try to rectify anything that was more difficult upon me than my intention."

And this is Sufyaan we are talking about, so it applies even more so for those other than him!! Therefore, one should not make this into something that diverts him away from seeking knowledge.

When Hishaam Ad-Dustawaa'ee, may Allaah have mercy on him, said; "By Allaah, I cannot (honestly) say that I ever went out one day to seek hadeeth for the sake of Allaah", Adh-Dhahabee, may Allaah have mercy on him, commented on this saying: "By Allaah, me either!"

The Salaf would seek knowledge for the sake of Allaah, and so they became dignified and went on to become Imaams that were followed and looked up to by the people. And there were other people from among them who did not seek knowledge for the sake of Allaah at first, but yet they still attained the knowledge, then they woke up and examined themselves. And so the knowledge led them to have sincerity while on their path (of seeking knowledge).

This becomes clearer in what was stated by Mujaahid and others: "We sought this knowledge while not having a big intention concerning it. Then Allaah granted us the intention (for it) afterward."

Others would say: "We sought this knowledge for other than the sake of Allaah. But the knowledge refused that it should be sought except for the sake of Allaah." So this is also good. Then, afterward, they went on to spread the knowledge with righteous intentions.

And there were other people that sought knowledge with corrupt intentions – for the sake of the worldly life and so that they could be praised by the people. So they got what they intended.

The Prophet ﷺ said: **"Whoever fights in battle with the intention of (getting) war booty, he will have what he intends."**

You will find this type of people not being illuminated by the light of knowledge. The knowledge has no impact on their souls nor does it produce a noticeable result in their actions. Rather, the one with knowledge is only he who fears Allaah.

Then there were other people that attained knowledge and achieved positions due to it, but they oppressed people and abandoned the requisites of knowledge, thus embarking on committing major sins and lewd acts!! So woe be to them – these people are not scholars.

Some other people do not fear Allaah with regard to their knowledge, but rather engage in schemes, issuing verdicts permitting prohibited matters and reporting unauthentic and irregular narrations.

Other people show audacity before Allaah and fabricate *ahaadeeth*, so Allaah exposed them and their knowledge left them. So their preparation became only for the Hellfire.

All of these types of people took in a large portion of knowledge, and they excelled in it, in the general sense. Then they were succeeded by later generations that had deficiency in knowledge and action. Then there followed a people after that who ascribed themselves to knowledge outwardly but were not well-versed in it, with the exception of a few among them who thought that because of that they had become noble scholars. However, it did not cross their minds that they were gaining nearness to Allaah through it.

The reason for this is because they did not experience any teacher that was taken as a role-model with regard to knowledge. So they became like savage barbarians. The biggest aim of one of their teachers was to obtain and amass costly books which they could look into on any given day. So they would misinterpret what was stated therein and not agree with it. We ask Allaah for salvation and pardon.

Some of them have stated: "I am not a scholar, nor have I seen a scholar."[12]

This third foundation is from amongst the important principles – and it is that a student strives to make his intention purely for the sake of Allaah when seeking knowledge. Achieving sincerity is something necessary. Allaah says:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

"And they were commanded not except to worship Allaah sincerely, making the worship purely for His sake." [Surah Al-Bayyinah: 5}

As we mentioned before, seeking the religious knowledge that is required in order to properly worship Allaah is itself an act of worship and part of the implementation of *Laa Ilaaha IllaaAllaah*. So in summary, seeking knowledge is an act of worship that one must strive to have sincerity in whilst performing it. The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: **"Verily, actions are based on intentions. And verily, every man will have what he intends."** [13]

Based on this, we say: A student of knowledge must continuously strive to correct his intention and to make it purely for the sake of Allaah.

[12] *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa* (7/152-153)

[13] Al-Bukhaaree reported this hadeeth in his *Saheeh*: Book of the Beginning of Revelation (no. 1) on the authority of 'Umar bin Al-Khattaab ؓ and Muslim in his *Saheeh*: Book of Leadership (no. 1907)

Someone may say: "Does this mean that I should not seek knowledge until I (first) correct my intention?"

I say: No. Rather, you should seek knowledge. But while you are seeking knowledge, you should examine yourself and rectify yourself by way of correcting your intention.

If this person continues, saying: "I want to leave off seeking knowledge until I (first) correct my intention!!"

I will reply by saying: This is a trap from the Devil. He has opened up for you one of the doors of good intending by that to turn you away from that which is better and greater. So therefore, you should continue and be perseverant in your search for knowledge. And you should continuously rectify yourself, for indeed your knowledge – Allaah-willing – will guide you to make your intention sincerely for the sake of Allaah.

The Salaf would say: "We sought this knowledge for other than the sake of Allaah. But the knowledge refused that it should be sought except for the sake of Allaah."

THE FOURTH FOUNDATION:

Knowledge means: The statements of Allaah and His Messenger and the statements of the Sahaabah (Companions), along with the unanimous agreement of the scholars (*ijmaa'*) and correct logical conclusion (*qiyaas*).

Therefore, the Qur'aan and Sunnah must be understood in light of the understanding of the Companions and those who followed them in goodness. This is the Way of the Believers, as Allaah says:

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ
سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّى وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءتْ مَصِيرًا

"And whoever opposes the Messenger after the guidance has been made clear to him, and follows a way other than the Way of the Believers, We will turn him to what He has chosen and land him in Hell – what an evil destination." [Surah An-Nisaa: 115]

How excellent is the statement of the one who said:

"Knowledge is: (what) Allaah said, (what) His Messenger said,
(and what) the Companions said, there being no variance in this.
Knowledge is not that you present a difference imprudently
between the Messenger and the view of a fool.
Nay, nor is it the presenting of a difference ignorantly
Between the texts and the view of a Faqeeh (Scholar)
Nay, nor is it the rejection of texts intentionally
out of fear of falling into tajseem[14] and tashbeeh." [15]

Al-Awzaa'ee, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Knowledge is what the Companions of Muhammad ﷺ have reported. Anything beyond this is not knowledge." [16]

Az-Zuhree, may Allaah have mercy on him, would write down the statements of the Taabi'een, and Saalih bin Kaysaan would oppose him in this. Later, he felt remorse for having abandoned that. [17]

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[14] **Translator's Note:** The evil act of ascribing anthropomorphic qualities to Allaah such as claiming that He has a physical hand.

[15] **Translator's Note:** The evil act of comparing and likening Allaah's attributes to the attributes of a created being, such as by saying Allaah's hand is like a human's hand.

[16] Transmitted by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *Jaami' Bayaa al-'Ilmi wa Fadlihi* (2/29)

[17] Reported by Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadee in *Taqyeed-ul-'Ilm* (pg. 106-107) and Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilmi wa Fadlihi* (1/76-77) in the footnotes of brother Muhammad Naasir Al-'Ajamee to *Bayaan Fadlu 'Ilm-is-Salaf* (pg. 69)

This is also the path that Abu Haneefah An-Nu'maan followed, may Allaah have mercy on him and be pleased with him.

Ibn Al-Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "I heard Abu Haneefah say: 'When something is reported from the Prophet, we take it. And when something is reported from the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, we choose from their opinions. And when something is reported from the Taabi'een, we contest with them (with our views as to which is correct).'" [18]

This was the same path taken by Maalik bin Anas Al-Asbahee, the Imaam of Madeenah, may Allaah have mercy on him and be pleased with him.

When his book *al-Muwatta'* was mentioned to him, Maalik said: "It contains the hadeeth of Allaah's Messenger and the statement(s) and opinion(s) of the Sahaabah and the Taabi'een. I also voiced my opinion based on *Ijtihaad* (scholarly deduction) and on what I found the people of knowledge upon in our lands, not transgressing that for the views of others." [19]

This was also the path that Ash-Shaafi'ee adhered to, may Allaah have mercy on him and be pleased with him. [20]

Ash-Shaafi'ee, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Knowledge is of several categories:

First: The Book and the Sunnah, if it is an authentically reported Sunnah;

Second: The unanimous agreement of the scholars in those matters in which proof from the Book and the Sunnah cannot be found;

Third: When some (or one) of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ said something and we don't know of any opposition to that from the rest of them;

Fourth: When the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ differed among themselves, yet he ﷺ did not object to them.

Fifth: *Qiyaas* (analytical deduction) of one of these categories.

One should not go to another source apart from the Book and the Sunnah so long as they are both present (i.e. proof is found in them). Knowledge should be taken from the highest source."[21]

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[18] *Akhbaar Abee Haneefah* of As-Saymaree (pg. 10) on the authority of Abu Yoosuf and *Eeqaadh Himam Uleel-Absaar* (pg. 70)
[19] *Tarteeb-ul-Madaarik* (1/193)
[20] His statement preceded in the first part of this foundation, but this is another one of his statements.
[21] *Al-Madkhal ilaas-Sunan-il-Kubraa* (pg. 110)

This was also the way of Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal, may Allaah have mercy on him and be pleased with him.

Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal said: "If a hadeeth from the Prophet ﷺ exists on an issue, we should not take the opinion of someone else that is in opposition to it – regardless if he is one of the Companions or those that came after them.

And if there exist conflicting views from the Companions of Allaah's Messenger on a particular issue, we may choose from their opinions. However, we do not transgress from their opinions to the views of someone else.

And if no statement from the Prophet or his Companions exists on an issue, we may choose from the opinions of the Taabi'een…" [22]

Muhammad bin Al-Hasan said: "Whoever is knowledgeable of the Book and the Sunnah, and of the opinions of the Companions of Allaah's Messenger ﷺ, and the views favored by the Muslim Fiqh scholars is allowed to exert his opinion by way of (scholarly) *Ijtihaad* in those matters in which he finds difficulty, thus ruling by it and implementing it in his prayer, fast, Hajj, and all of the other things he was commanded and prohibited to do.

But if he exerts his efforts to come up with an opinion, and investigates and applies analytical deduction, and still doesn't come up with the correct view, he is permitted to act on his resulting view, even if he did err in attaining the correct view that should be followed." [23]

Muhammad bin Al-Hasan also said: "Knowledge is of four types:

1. That which is found in the clear Book of Allaah, and what is analytically deduced from it;

2. That which is found in the reported Sunnah of Allaah's Messenger, and what is analytically deduced from it;

3. That which the Sahaabah (Companions), may Allaah have mercy on them, unanimously agreed on, and what is analytically deduced from it;

This also includes the issues they differed on, so long as it doesn't transgress beyond their views. If one of their opinions is chosen, that (view) is considered knowledge that was analytically arrived at.

4. That which the majority of the Muslim Fiqh scholars have favored as well as what is analytically deduced from that and which serves as an equivalent to it.

[22] *Al-Musawwadah* (pg. 276)
[23] Reported by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilmi wa Fadlihi* (2/61)

Knowledge does not exceed the boundaries of these four types." [24]

*** This foundation consists of several matters, amongst which are:**

1. A student of knowledge should accustom himself to connect issues with their evidences from the Book and the Sunnah, according to the understanding of the pious predecessors (Salaf as-Saalih). This is where the importance of the books written on the rulings found in *ayaat* and *ahaadeeth* and the books on the narrations of the Companions comes in.

2. The Sunnh of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ is divided into two types:

A. The apparent Sunnah, which is explicitly clear, and
B. The unapparent Sunnah, which is not explicitly clear.

As for the first type of Sunnah, which is the clear and apparent Sunnah, then it refers to what is clearly attributed to the Prophet ﷺ from statements, actions, tacit approvals, behavioral descriptions and physical attributes. This is considered **"the Sunnah"** according to the scholars of Hadeeth.

From the categories above, those that are related to religious rulings, and which serve to establish obligations and laws, are: his ﷺ statements, actions, and tacit approvals. This is why the scholars that formulate principles (*Usooliyoon*) and those that excel in Jurisprudence (*Fuqahaa*) have limited the definition of the Sunnah to just these categories, since their main objective was just to clarify the religious laws.

The second type of Sunnah, which is the Sunnah that is not explicitly clear, refers to that which is attributed to one of the Companions for which there is no room for opinions in the matter or that which takes on the ruling of being raised to a saying or action of the Prophet.

This consists of the following scenarios:

A. When a Companion makes a statement on a matter in which there is no room for one's opinion to enter into it (i.e. so naturally he received knowledge of it from the Prophet);
B. When a Companion issues an opinion and there is no text that contradicts it;
C. When a Companion explains the circumstances under which a verse from the Qur'aan was revealed, in a clear manner;
D. When a Companion explains something that has been reported;
E. What has been reported from the Companions concerning their difference of opinion in the description of acts of worship;
F. What has been reported from the Companions, in that which is known as "Interpretative Recitation";

[24] Reported by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilmi wa Fadlihi* (2/26)

G. What has been reported from them as interpretations of the noble Qur'aan from some of the scholars.

It is for this reason that a student of knowledge must strive to find out what has been reported on the Companions with regard to issues of knowledge.

However, there are some shortcomings that occur in this aspect, and that is due to several reasons:

First: There is a general lack of concern for finding out which narrations are authentic from which are weak.

Second: Verifying the opinion of a Companion on an issue.

Third: Discrediting the ascription of an opinion to a Companion before verifying if it was the last of the views he had on the issue or not.

3. In order to fully implement this principle, you must know that it is not permissible for us to introduce an opinion on a particular issue that is outside the realm of their views.

Their statements – may Allaah have mercy on them – show a unanimous agreement on this approach. So whoever transgresses beyond the fold of their views has departed from the path of the believers. We also just recently quoted their statements in this regard.

Abul-Mudhfar As-Sama'aanee, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "We were ordered to follow and encouraged to do that. And we were prohibited from innovating as well as warned against it. The trademark of Ahlus-Sunnah is their following of the Salaf whilst abandoning everything that is innovated and newly-introduced." [25]

Ibn Taimiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Whoever interprets the Qur'aan or the Hadeeth, explaining them in a way that is different from the well-known interpretations of the Companions and Successors, is fabricating a lie on Allaah, denying Allaah's verses and distorting words from their proper places. This is opening the door to heresy and atheism. The falsehood of this is known in the religion of Islaam by necessity." [26]

So it is not for anyone to interpret a verse or a hadeeth in a manner that contradicts the interpretation of the Companions of Allaah's Messenger, may Allaah be pleased with them.

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[25] *Al-Intisaar Li-Ahlil-Hadeeth* of Abul-Mudhfar As-Sama'aanee, which is found in *Sawn-ul-Mantiq wal-Kalaam* (pg. 158)
[26] *Majmoo'-ul-Fataawaa* (13/243)

Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "And in our time – I say: And in our time, this applies even more[27] – the recording of the statements of the exemplary Salaf is restricted to the time of Ash-Shaafi'ee, Ahmad, Ishaaq and Abu 'Ubayd. So let the individual beware of what was introduced after them, for indeed there were many innovations that were introduced after their time. And there appeared those who ascribed themselves to following the Sunnah and the Hadeeth, such as the Dhaahirees and their likes who are the greatest in opposing it (i.e. the Sunnah) due to their deviation from the Imaams and their isolation from them in coming up with an understanding (of the texts), or their taking a view that the Imaams before them never held." [28]

I say:

Ahmad bin Hanbal, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Beware of speaking on an issue for which you do not have an Imaam (i.e. scholar who preceded you in it)." [29]

4. It is due to this principle – which is understanding the Glorious Qur'aan and the Prophetic Sunnah in light of the understanding of the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them – that you will not find Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah, the people of Hadeeth, engaging in the interpretation of the glorious Qur'aan or the explanation of the meanings of the Hadeeth from a linguistic and intellectual standpoint. Rather, you will find them investigating into the narrations, compiling the reports of the Salaf in their books, and basing their understanding and analytical deductions on that, contrary to the people of innovations and desires!!

Ibn Taimiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "The Murji'ah have deviated concerning this foundation (i.e. Eemaan) from what is clearly stated in the Qur'aan, the Sunnah and the statements of the Companions and those who follow them in righteousness. Instead, they have relied on their personal views and on the perverted interpretations they have reached from their understanding of the (Arabic) language. This is the way of the people of innovation. And this is why Imaam Ahmad would say: 'The majority of the time that people fall into error is due to misinterpretation and incorrect analogy.'

This is why we find the Mu'atazilah, the Murji'ah, the Raafidah and other groups of innovators interpreting the Qur'aan with their own opinions and intellects and what they understand from it linguistically. As a result of this, you will find that they do not rely on the narrations of the Prophet, the Companions, the Successors or the Muslim Imaams. So they neither rely on the Sunnah nor do they rely on the unanimous consensus or reports of the Salaf. Rather, they just rely on the intellect and the language.

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[27] **Translator's Note:** This statement is from the author, Shaikh Muhammad Baazmool.
[28] *Bayaan Fadlu 'Ilm-is-Salaf* (pg. 69)
[29] This was quoted in *Majmoo'-ul-Fataawaa* (21/291) and Ibn Al-Jawzee mentioned its chain of narration in *Manaaqib-ul-Imaam Ahmad bin Hanbal* (pg. 178)

We also do not find them relying on the recorded books of Tafseer and Hadeeth and the narrations of the Salaf. Instead, they only rely on the books of literature and rhetoric that their leaders fabricated. This is also the way of the heretics. They only accept what is in the books of philosophy, literature and language. As for the books on Qur'aan, Hadeeth and Narrations, they do not give any importance to them.

These individuals turn away from the texts of the Prophets since according to them, they do not produce any knowledge!

And they are the ones who interpret the Qur'aan according to their own personal views and understanding, without resorting to any of the narrations of the Prophet and his Companions.

We already mentioned previously the statements of Imaam Ahmad and others which show the prohibition of this and an indication that this is the way of the people of innovation." [30]

He also said: "Innovations only entered into the beliefs of the innovators because of the fact that they turned away from this path and began to base the Religion of Islaam on leads that were not correct, either due to what the verbatim indicated or what was understood from the meanings. They did not reflect on the explanation that came from Allaah and His Messenger. All leads that contradict the explanation of Allaah and His Messenger are considered misguidance."[31]

Disregarding the *ahaadeeth* and narrations of the Salaf while relying on just the language and intellect to understand the Qur'aan and Hadeeth is a method that has been embarked upon in recent times by the Orientalists. So when they need to research a narration, they simply quote from the books of Al-Jaahidh or from the book *al-Aghaanee* or from *al-'Aqd-ul-Fareed*. And if quoting becomes hard on them, they just say: "This conforms to the intellect!"

Contrary to this, a Muslim who follows what the Prophet and his Companions were upon confines his comprehension and understanding of the Glorious Qur'aan and Prophetic Sunnah to conform to the understanding of the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, and doesn't leave from their fold.

And if he must resort to Ijtihaad (scholarly deduction) or investigation on an issue, he searches if there is someone before him (Salaf) that held that view so that he may follow him, and if not, he leaves it alone. This is since all good lies in following those who preceded (Salaf), while all evil lies in the innovating of those who came after (Khalaf). So stick to the early generation.

[30] *Al-Eemaan* (pg. 114)
[31] *Majmoo'-ul-Fataawaa* (7/288)

THE FIFTH FOUNDATION:

The Scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets, so one must observe good manners in front of them.

Abud-Dardaa ﷺ reported: "I heard the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ say: **'Whoever treads a path due to which he seeks knowledge, Allaah will make him tread one of the paths towards Paradise. The angels lower their wings out of contentment for the seeker of knowledge. And verily all those in the heavens and in the earth, even the fish in the depths of the sea ask forgiveness for the scholar. Indeed the virtue of the scholar over the worshipper is like the virtue of the moon on the night of Al-Badr over all of the stars. The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets, for the prophets do not leave behind a dinar or a dirham for inheritance, but rather, they leave behind knowledge. So whoever takes hold of it, has acquired a large share (i.e. of inheritance).'"** [32]

Abu Haatim Ibn Hibbaan, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: "There is a clear explanation in this hadeeth that the scholars, who possess the virtue we mentioned before, are the ones who teach the people the knowledge of the Prophet, apart from all of the other types of knowledge. Did you not see him say: **'The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets?'** The prophets do not leave behind any inheritance except knowledge, and the knowledge of our Prophet ﷺ is his Sunnah. So whoever is deprived of learning it is not from the inheritors of the prophets." [33]

*** This foundation necessitates the implementation of several things, which include:**

1. One must have good manners with the scholars
He should not debate with his teacher
He should not ask his teacher too many questions
He should not cause commotions in his gathering
He should praise him when speaking to him and while mentioning him in his absence
He should hold good thoughts for him and his knowledge
He should behave properly while in his gathering
He should show respect for him in his daily affairs.

This does not mean that a student should not contradict his teacher when a proof that deserves to be followed becomes established to him. It has been narrated from Abu Ayyoob As-

[32] Reported by Abu Dawood, At-Tirmidhee and Ibn Hibbaan, and this is the wording found in his collection, in abridged form. Al-Bukhaaree mentioned in his *Saheeh* Collection in his Book of Knowledge, Chapter: Knowledge precedes Speech and Action, the part from it: **"The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets."**
[33] *Al-Ihsaan bi-Taqreeb Saheeh Ibn Hibbaan*: (1/295, under no. 88)

Sakhtiyaanee, may Allaah have mercy on him, that he said: "If you want to know the errors of your teacher, then sit with someone else (i.e. another teacher)."

2. Taking knowledge from the *shuyookh* (teachers) is the basis with regard to seeking knowledge. By doing this, the student takes knowledge from them face to face, and grasps from their manners and behavior. This only applies if the student is a contemporary of those teachers and around during their lifetime! Or he can take from their books and writings, thus reading from them in order to learn and understand, while of course, having good thoughts (for them)!

THE SIXTH FOUNDATION:

Obstacles in the Path of Seeking Knowledge

Since knowledge is a path that leads towards Paradise, and Paradise is surrounded by many dangers, this means that the path of knowledge is also surrounded by many dangers. So there are many things in it that are hated to the disinclined souls.

And since knowledge facilitates the path to Paradise, and the Devil promised to cut off the paths that lead to Paradise, then indeed, the path of knowledge is a path in which the Devil places what deceptions he can in order to divert the person on it away from his objective.

The foundation for all sins lies in three things: greed, jealousy and pride.

It was greed that cast our father Aadam out of Paradise. This is what the Devil whispered to him when he saw his eagerness for Paradise:

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِن سَوْءَاتِهِمَا وَقَالَ
مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَـذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلاَّ أَن تَكُونَا مَلَكَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ

"Then the Devil whispered suggestions to them both in order to uncover that which was hidden from them (before) of their private parts. He said (to them): 'Your Lord only forbade you from this tree so that you would not become angels or become of the immortals.' And he (the Devil) swore by Allaah to them both (saying): 'Verily, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both.'" [Surah Al-A'raaf: 20]

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى

"Then the Devil whispered to him saying: 'O Aadam! Shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that will never waste away?'" [Surah TaHa: 120]

It was jealousy that caused the enmity to occur between the two sons of Aadam, when they both brought sacrificial offerings and it was accepted from one of them but not from the other, who then raised his hand to kill the other one out of jealousy.

It was pride that brought Iblees to disbelief:

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلاَ مِنْهَا رَغَداً
حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلاَ تَقْرَبَا هَـذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الْظَّالِمِينَ

"And (remember) when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate to Aadam.' So they all prostrated except for Iblees – he refused and was proud and was one of the disbelievers." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 35]

Since these three things are the foundations for all sin, and all offenses can be traced back to them, then indeed the distractions and obstacles of seeking knowledge can also be traced back to them.

Examples of this are as follows:

1. A student's greed for knowledge – if he doesn't pay attention to his other obligations – may cause him to eventually abandon and squander knowledge. There are several scenarios for this, such as:

- When a student crams his daily schedule with acquiring knowledge, thus preoccupying himself with it every day, attending numerous classes and study circles. So his body does not rest, whereas your soul has a right over you and your body also has a right over you. So you must give everything that has a right (over you) its due right.

- Greed may also bring a student to change from one form of knowledge to another before having completed the first one. By doing this, he deprives himself of having the correct understanding and command of both forms of knowledge. An example of this is when a student starts studying a book, then hears about another class in a different place, so he leaves off from finishing the first book with the instructor and goes to the other class.

All of this is as a result of greed. On the outset, this is good but it can lead to the opposite of what was intended. This reminds me of a statement made by one of the Salaf: "Verily, the Devil opens ninety-nine doors from the doors of good, just so that he can place you into one door from the doors of evil."

Ibn Shihaab Az-Zuhree, may Allaah have mercy on him, once said to Yoonus bin Yazeed: "O Yoonus! Do not strive to surpass knowledge, for knowledge is like river basins – whichever of them you set out after, it will cut you off before you can reach it. Rather, you must take it with (the passage of) days and nights. And you must not take knowledge all at once for indeed whoever seeks to attain it all at once, it will leave him all at once. Rather, knowledge must be taken step by step, with (the passage of) days and nights." [34]

2. Jealousy can prevent a student of knowledge from acquiring knowledge. Examples of this are:

- When a student envies his colleagues over seeking knowledge, and even though he lacks understanding on a particular issue, he arrogantly refrains from asking them because he is

[34] *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi* (1/138)

jealous of them. So he doesn't research or study with them, whereas the thing that gives knowledge life is consulting and reminding one another about it. Therefore, this deprives him of seeking knowledge.

- When a student envies his professor or teacher for what he has and as a result rebels against him in his class and doesn't want him to teach and benefit the other students. So he feels that there is no difference between him and his teacher. This also prevents one from acquiring knowledge.

- When a person feels jealous of his colleagues because of their level of understanding and desire to learn, so he causes disruptions in the class to the point that he deprives them of the ability to benefit, out of jealousy. However, he is in fact only depriving himself by doing this.

3. Pride can also prevent the student of knowledge from learning and receiving education. Examples of this are:

- Perhaps Allaah has granted someone the ability to attain knowledge, but an envious arrogant person considers him to be of a lower standing than himself, so as a result of this, he refrains from learning from him.

- Pride can also prevent a person from trying to learn something he doesn't understand or from asking his teacher about it in order to understand it. In fact, seeking knowledge primarily due to pride can prevent him from sitting in the gatherings of the students of knowledge in front of *shuyookh* (teachers).

- A person may be jealous of his colleagues and thus refrain haughtily from asking them and trying to learn from them those issues that he has difficulty with or those subjects he was not present for.

Al-Bayhaqee reported in *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* from Abu Haazim that he said: "You cannot be a scholar until you have three characteristics in you: (1) Do not transgress over those above you, (2) Do not look down with contempt at those below you, and (3) Do not take the worldly life in exchange for your knowledge." [35]

- Pride may lead a person to boast, make pretentious claims, and to argue with others, and these are all things that are prohibited in the Religion.

Jaabir bin 'Abdillaah ﷺ reported that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: **"Do not acquire knowledge for the sake of competing with the scholars or to argue with the foolish or to take control over a gathering, for whoever does that, then (for him will be) the Hellfire, the Hellfire."** [36]

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[35] *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (2/288)
[36] Reported by Ibn Maajah, Ibn Hibbaan and Al-Haakim

THE SEVENTH FOUNDATION:

The Ways of Maintaining Knowledge

From the most significant ways of upholding and preserving knowledge is: (1) Acting on it, (2) teaching it to others, and (3) writing concerning it.

These three methods have been indicated in Allaah's statement:

وَالْعَصْرِ . إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ . إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

"By the time. Verily, mankind is at loss – Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds and mutually advise one another towards truth and mutually advise one another towards patience." [Surah Al-'Asr]

Allaah has ruled that all of mankind is at loss, but then makes an exception to this for those who believe, so long as they remain believers. This is since they have acquired beneficial knowledge, then acted on it, then called others to this action and to the beneficial knowledge that is with them. So the most important way of consolidating knowledge is acting upon it, teaching it to others and writing about it.

Acting upon one's knowledge is one of the most significant ways by which knowledge can become firmly rooted in a person. Rather, this is the primary objective for seeking knowledge. It has been reported on the Salaf that they used to say: "Knowledge summons actions, so if it does not respond, it departs."

Wakee' said: "We would seek help for memorizing hadeeth, by acting upon them." [37]

What falls under the subject of acting upon knowledge is the talk about one's abandonment of committing sins and acts of disobedience. This is since falling into these acts contradicts everything that knowledge mandates.

There are some famous verses that elaborate this understanding further:

"I complained to Wakee' about my poor memory
So he advised me to abandon sins
And he informed me that knowledge is a virtue
And Allaah's virtue is not given to a sinner."

[37] *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa* (6/228)

Muhammad bin an-Nadr Al-Haarithee said: "It used to be said that the first instruction (for knowledge) was: Remaining silent for it (i.e. knowledge), then listening to it, then memorizing it, then acting upon it, then spreading it."

Sufyaan said: "The scholar does not argue nor does he flatter (others). He only spreads the wisdom of Allaah. If it is accepted from him, he praises Allaah. And if it is rejected, he praises Allaah." [38]

Jaabir reported: "Learn to remain silent, then learn to be refrained, then acquire knowledge, then learn to act on it, then spread it." [39]

They would also be eager to act upon the *ahaadeeth* that would reach them from Allaah's Messenger ﷺ, even if there did not appear any directive towards worship in them. This was only done because of their attempt to follow the chosen one ﷺ.

'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Mahdee reported: I heard Sufyaan say: "No hadeeth from the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was ever conveyed to me except that I acted upon it, even if it was just once." [40]

And Ahmad bin Hanbal, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "I never wrote down a hadeeth except that I acted upon it. This was such that it reached me that the Prophet ﷺ was cupped (*Hijaamah*) and gave Abu Tayyibah a deenar. So I gave the blood-cupper a deenar when he cupped me." [41]

So when a person is sincere with knowledge and acts upon it, his aspiration becomes for the Hereafter and he walks upon the earth with humility.

Ibraaheem bin Adham said: "Whoever seeks knowledge with true sincerity, in order to benefit the servants of Allaah with it and benefit himself, being unknown will be more beloved to him than being arrogant. This is what will cause him to increase in humility with regard to himself, exertion with regard to worship, fear from Allaah, longing for Him, and humbleness in front of the people – not caring for what goes on in the day and night of this worldly life." [42]

Teaching knowledge also helps one to maintain it. This does not mean that one should actively seek to put himself forward before he is ready. Rather, what it means is that he strives to mutually confer his knowledge and give it to those colleagues who ask him about it, as well as those below him. So he teaches them and repeatedly holds lessons with them.

[38] *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (2/288)
[39] *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (2/288)
[40] *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa* (7/242)
[41] *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa* (11/213)
[42] *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (2/288)

This does not mean that he rushes to be their *shaikh* (teacher) or seeks leadership before his due time, for indeed these are from the great dangers, as the saying goes: "He became a raisin before becoming a dried grape."

Ash-Shaafi'ee said: "If a young person is put in a leadership role, he will be deprived of much good."

Authoring on knowledge means that you write down the issues, arranging them in order and providing research for them based on the foundation of evidence. And it means that you collect the statements of the people of knowledge on every issue, writing them down and putting them in order, whilst avoiding the incorrect and irregular ones among them, in your earnest attempt to search for the truth.

We don't mean by a student preoccupying himself with authoring that he strives hard in writing a book and giving it out to the people, since the student, at this stage, has not reached this level yet. Rather, he should present his books and writings to the scholars as well as those above him and those who preceded him in knowledge, for the purpose of seeking their advice and heeding their statements and instructions. What is intended here is that writing down knowledge helps one to memorize and remember knowledge and its issues.

THE EIGHTH FOUNDATION:

Stages for Investigating the Issues of Knowledge

Every issue related to knowledge must pass through four stages when subjected to a detailed investigation, after which a student of knowledge can grasp the most correct opinion on issues in which the scholars have differed.

These four stages are:

1. The authenticity of the proof being used,
2. The validity of using this proof as evidence,
3. The absence of some text that would abrogate this proof, and
4. The absence of a text that contradicts this proof.

These (four) stages can be applied to any issue that requires investigation and final determination.

The (Fiqh) issues of knowledge are many. However, from the foundations of the student of knowledge is that he must maintain this principle, which is that:

Whenever he investigates into an issue, he must first verify the proofs involved in that issue. Then, secondly, he must investigate into the validity of using those proofs for that specific issue. Thirdly, he must determine that these proofs (that are authentic and valid) are free from being abrogated. Fourthly, he must look into if these (authentic, valid and unabrogated) proofs are not contradicted (by other proofs). Let's use an example for this:

There are many things that nullify one's ablution (*wudoo*). We will take, for example, the issue of wudoo being nullified due to vomiting. A student reads that *wudoo* is invalidated due to vomiting, so he says: "I would like to investigate this matter."

We say to him: "Yes, investigate this issue. Is there any evidence that indicates that vomiting invalidates *wudoo*?"

He says: Yes, such and such scholar reported the hadeeth that the Prophet ﷺ once vomited and then performed *wudoo*."

This hadeeth is an authentic hadeeth. So this confirms the first point, which was **"Verifying the Authenticity of the Proof."**

So he then looks into the next stage, which is: **"The Validity of using this Proof as Evidence."** Is it correct to use this hadeeth as evidence that vomiting invalidates *wudoo*? So he investigates – is there any clear proof in the hadeeth that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ performed *wudoo* due to vomiting? No, there cannot be found in the hadeeth any clear proof

that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ performed *wudoo* due to vomiting. Why? It is because nothing is mentioned in the hadeeth except for a mere action. And according to the scholars, a mere action (without a command) does not indicate that something is obligatory. It only indicates that something is recommended.

They defined a "mere action" as an action that was done by the Prophet ﷺ, which does not serve to clarify the general concept of an ayah or another hadeeth.

Therefore, can we derive from this hadeeth that the one who vomits is obligated to perform *wudoo*? No, we can't derive such a ruling from this hadeeth.

So we say: There is speculation with this hadeeth and the validity of its usage as evidence for the invalidation of *wudoo* due to the excretion of vomit. The basis of speculation is the fact that the hadeeth only contains a mere action in it, and that does not indicate an obligation.

In this example, the student applied the first and second stage, but the issue was stopped there. So there was no need to apply the third and fourth stages.

He may also encounter issues in which the *ahaadeeth* may seem to contend with each other. Let us take another example from the Fiqh issues of ablution, which is the hadeeth**: "Whoever touches his private part must perform *wudoo*."**

We say: Apply the principle. So the student conducts his research and discovers that there is a difference of opinion on the authenticity of this hadeeth, but that the stronger view is that it is a sound (*hasan*) hadeeth, thus completing the first stage.

Now he comes to the second stage: Is it valid to use this hadeeth as a proof for this issue?

We say: Yes, it is valid to use this hadeeth, since it is apparent from its wording that *wudoo* is invalidated due to the touching of one's private part.

After this, we come to the third stage. So the student investigates if the hadeeth is free of any abrogation. Here, he finds that some scholars have relayed that this hadeeth is abrogated, and that what abrogates it is the hadeeth of Talq, in which he said: "I asked the Prophet ﷺ about touching the private part, so he said: **'Is it not but a part of your body?'**"

Some scholars said: This hadeeth came later, while the first one came before, so the latter report abrogates the first report. Therefore the second hadeeth abrogates the first hadeeth.

We also find some scholars saying: "I do not agree with the opinion that it is abrogated, since the basis is that there is a lack of an abrogation." However, this hadeeth still contradicts the first hadeeth.

So now he comes to the fourth stage, which is determining if the hadeeth is free from contradictory reports. So he says: "This hadeeth contradicts the first hadeeth, so I will combine between the two of them, by saying: Whoever touches his private part with desire invalidates his *wudoo* in accordance with the hadeeth: **'Whoever touches his private part must perform wudoo.'** And whoever touches his private part, as if he were touching any other part of his body, i.e. without desire, then his wudoo is not invalidated, based on the Prophet's statement: **'Is it not but a part of your body?'**"

Others, such as Muhammad bin Yahyaa Adh-Dhihlee, the teacher of Imaam Al-Bukhaaree, said: "I understand the first hadeeth to mean it (i.e. renewing the wudoo) is recommended, not obligatory, due to the presence of the second hadeeth. So I will combine between these two hadeeths in this manner."

This was the opinion that Shaikh-ul-Islaam (Ibn Taimiyyah) favored, as he said: "Touching the private part does not invalidate wudoo. Rather, it is just recommended to perform the wudoo because of that, in compliance with the combination of the two hadeeths." This is the opinion that Muhammad bin Yahyaa Adh-Dhihlee held as reported on him by Al-Haakim in *Ma'rifat 'Uloom-il-Hadeeth*.

So these are the issues of knowledge, and these four stages can be applied to any of them.

What is intended by this foundation is that the lack of implementing these four stages when researching the issues of knowledge can cause the student to fall into something called **"Improper Verification of the Issues."** It is from the main duties and concerns of the student that he strives hard to properly verify the knowledge that he has in front of him. This can be made possible by implementing these four stages whenever conducting research and investigation into any of the issues of knowledge in which there can be found more than one opinion (from the scholars) and various types of evidences.

What is intended by "Investigating into the authenticity of the proof" is that the student researches into if the proof is authentic or not.

So, for example, if the proof is an *ayah* from the Qur'aan, then the Qur'aan is authentic and well established, there is no speculation concerning it from the standpoint of its authenticity.

And if the proof is a hadeeth, then one is required to investigate into the authenticity of the hadeeth and into its level of acceptability or dismissal.

If the proof is an *ijmaa'* (i.e. unanimous agreement of the scholars), then he must investigate into the validity of the existence of this unanimous agreement, and that there can't be found any scholar that disagreed on this issue.

If the proof is a *qiyaas* (analytical deduction), then he must look into the validity and authenticity of the conditions of the *qiyaas*. And if not, then it would be an analytical deduction in spite of the differences

This is what is generally meant by "establishing the proof." There are many details that go under this phrase.

What is intended by investigating into the validity of using the proof as evidence is that the student looks into if the proof can be applied to the claim or not. How many people use an authentic hadeeth as evidence yet it doesn't apply to their claim. In fact, there are even some that use an ayah from the Qur'aan as proof even though it doesn't apply to their claim. And this is all because of the lack of the validity of using that proof as evidence!!

What is intended by looking into if the proof is free from an abrogating text is that the student investigates: Is this hadeeth that he is using to support his claim firm and solid? Or does it fall under the ranks of the texts that are abrogated? So he applies the rules of the abrogating and the abrogated to it.

What is intended by investigating into if the proof is free from contradictions is that one determines that there is no text that contradicts it. So he applies to it the rules of opposing and problematic texts.

After going through these four stages, one can finally determine what the strongest opinion on an issue is.

THE NINTH FOUNDATION:

People are divided into two categories with respect to knowledge: (1) Those who know, and (2) those who don't know.

Those who don't know are obligated to ask the people of knowledge and accept their statements, while expending what effort they can in order to learn the proofs and evidences.

Allaah says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ إِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُواْ أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And We did not send before you anyone except men that we gave revelation to. So ask the people of remembrance (knowledge) if you don't know. With clear signs and books (We sent the Messengers). And We also sent down unto you the Reminder (i.e. Sunnah) so that you may explain clearly to the people what was revealed to them (i.e. the Qur'aan), and that they may give thought." [Surah An-Nahl: 43-44]

The one who knows the religious ruling on an issue, based on its evidences, is from those who know. So he is a person of knowledge (*'aalim*).

And whoever takes the opinion of someone else without knowing its proof, he is a blind-follower (*muqallid*), and not a person of knowledge. Ibn 'Abdil-Barr relayed the consensus (*Ijmaa'*) that the blind-follower – who is the one who accepts the opinion of someone else without knowing its evidence – is not from the scholars.

And as for the one who knows an issue based on its evidence, while investigating the different views and proofs used on the issue, while taking the view that appears most correct to him, then he is a *Mujtahid*.

As for the one who has knowledge of an issue based on its evidences, meaning that he has accepted the view for which the proofs are most convincing to him on that issue, without making efforts into examining or looking into the other (differing) opinions. So he only has knowledge of the most correct view based on its evidences. This person is a follower (*muttabi'*).

If the Mujtahid is one who abides by this methodology in all of the issues of knowledge and doesn't restrict himself to just looking into the principles of one specific *madh-hab*, then this person is an absolute *Mujtahid*.

If he limits himself to investigating an issue by only looking into the principles of one particular *madh-hab*, then he is a limited Mujtahid.

So if his condition is that he performs Ijtihaad in all of the issues of the Religion, then he is a complete Mujtahid. And if his condition is Ijtihaad in just some issues, apart from others, then he is a partial Mujtahid.

So with regard to an issue, a person can be a Mujtahid implementing partial Ijtihaad, and on another issue he could be a *muttabi'* (follower), and yet in another issue, he could be a *muqallid* (blind-follower). This varies according to what is easy for him during the occurrence of an event that this issue relates to.

One must also beware of opinions. This refers to statements in the Religion of Allaah that have no authentic or considerable evidences.

You must also know, my brother, that the Qur'aan and the Sunnah serve as the foundation for all opinions and they act as the standard from which all opinions are determined. The opinion is not the standard used to determine the Sunnah. Rather, the Sunnah is the standard used to determine the opinion. So whoever doesn't know the foundation will never attain the branch.

Ibn Wahb said: Maalik narrated to me that Iyyaas bin Mu'aawiyah said to Rabee'ah: "When something is built upon crookedness, it will never be able to straighten itself." Maalik said: "He means by this, the Muftee that speaks based on a foundation, which he builds his speech on." [43]

Ash-Shaafi'ee, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Whoever learns the Qur'aan, his value becomes magnified. Whoever speaks about Fiqh, his status becomes increased. Whoever records Hadeeth, his arguments become strengthened. Whoever looks into accounting, his views will become unerring. And whoever does not maintain himself, his knowledge will not benefit him." [44]

Ibn Hibbaan, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "The most complete form of salvation and the most comprehensive form of nobility can be found in adhering to the Sunnah. Its lights cannot be doused nor can its arguments be refuted. Whoever adheres to it will be protected, and whoever opposes it will be condemned. This is since it is the stronghold and the firm support whose merit is clear and whose rope is solid. Whoever holds onto it prevails and whoever contradicts it becomes destroyed. So those who stick to it will be successful in the next life while blessed amongst the creatures in the present life." [45]

[End of the Treatise]

[43] *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi* (2/166-172) with some very light abridgement and adaptations
[44] *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa* (10/24)
[45] *Saheeh Ibn Hibbaan: al-Ihsaan* (1/86)